

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) A metal gasket for a cylinder head, comprising:

two base plates (2), respectively ~~made~~ comprised of i) metal plates and layered over each other, each of said base plates (2) including cylinder holes (2a) formed to correspond to respective cylinder bores on a cylinder block of an internal combustion engine, ii) annular beads (2b) of an angled cross-sectional shape formed around said respective cylinder holes, iii) coolant holes (2c) formed on outer peripheral portions of said respective annular beads to correspond to coolant jackets on said cylinder block and to coolant holes on a cylinder head of said internal combustion engine, and iv) an outer peripheral bead (2d) having a cross-sectional shape sloping on one side and being formed in a position to totally surround said annular beads and said coolant holes;

an auxiliary plate (3) made of a metal plate and interposed between said two base plates; and

a hard metal-plated layer (5), formed on at least one surface of said auxiliary plate, and configured to extend from a position more radially inward than said annular bead to a

position radially outward to overlap each of said annular beads of said base plate and to face a top portion of said annular bead, and thereby to surround each of said cylinder holes on said base plate annularly, wherein,

said hard metal-plated layer (5) has hardness equal to or above Hv 60, and

said hard metal-plated layer (5) at a less rigid portion of said internal combustion engine has a first thickness greater than a second thickness of said hard metal-plated layer (5) at a more rigid portion of said internal combustion engine such that a distribution of an amount of a step of said hard metal-plated layer relevant to said plurality of cylinder holes (2a) corresponds to a distribution of rigidity of said internal combustion engine relevant to said plurality of cylinder bores.

2. (previously presented) The metal gasket for a cylinder head according to claim 1,

wherein an annular bead having an angled cross-sectional shape is formed on said auxiliary plate to overlap said annular bead on said base plate and to allow top positions to face each other.

3. (currently amended) A metal gasket for a cylinder head, comprising:

two base plates (2), respectively ~~made~~ comprised of i) metal plates and layered over each other, each of said base plates (2) including cylinder holes (2a) formed to correspond to respective cylinder bores on a cylinder block of an internal combustion engine, ii) annular beads (2b) of an angled cross-sectional shape formed around said respective cylinder holes, iii) coolant holes (2c) formed on outer peripheral portions of said respective annular beads to correspond to coolant jackets on said cylinder block and to coolant holes on a cylinder head of said internal combustion engine, and iv) an outer peripheral bead (2d) having a cross-sectional shape sloping on one side and being formed in a position to totally surround said annular beads and said coolant holes; and

a hard metal-plated layer (5) formed on ~~either~~ at least one ~~or both~~ of said two base plates on a surface of the at least one base plate facing the other base plate, and configured to extend from a position more radially inward than said annular bead to a position radially outward to overlap each of said annular beads of said base plate and to face a top portion of said annular bead, and thereby to surround each of said cylinder holes on said base plate annularly, wherein,

said hard metal-plated layer (5) has hardness equal to or above Hv 60, and

said hard metal-plated layer (5) at a less rigid portion of said internal combustion engine has a first thickness

greater than a second thickness of said hard metal-plated layer (5) at a more rigid portion of said internal combustion engine such that a distribution of an amount of a step of said hard metal-plated layer relevant to said plurality of cylinder holes (2a) corresponds to a distribution of rigidity of said internal combustion engine relevant to said plurality of cylinder bores.

4-20. (canceled)

21. (previously presented) The metal gasket for a cylinder head according to claim 1, wherein the hard metal-plated layer (5) is an electroplated layer.

22. (previously presented) The metal gasket for a cylinder head according to claim 1, wherein the hard metal-plated layer (5) is a molten metal plated layer.

23-27. (canceled)

28. (previously presented) The metal gasket for a cylinder head according to claim 1,

wherein said hard metal-plated layer (5) is made of nickel.

29. (previously presented) The metal gasket for a cylinder head according to claim 1,

wherein said hard metal-plated layer (5) is made of nickel-phosphorus.

30. (previously presented) The metal gasket for a cylinder head according to claim 1,

wherein said hard metal-plated layer (5) is made of copper.

31. (previously presented) The metal gasket for a cylinder head according to claim 2,

wherein said hard metal-plated layer (5) is made of nickel.

32. (previously presented) The metal gasket for a cylinder head according to claim 2,

wherein said hard metal-plated layer (5) is made of nickel-phosphorus.

33. (previously presented) The metal gasket for a cylinder head according to claim 2,

wherein said hard metal-plated layer (5) is made of copper.

34. (previously presented) The metal gasket for a cylinder head according to claim 3,

wherein said hard metal-plated layer (5) is made of nickel.

35. (previously presented) The metal gasket for a cylinder head according to claim 3,

wherein said hard metal-plated layer (5) is made of nickel-phosphorus.

36. (previously presented) The metal gasket for a cylinder head according to claim 3,

wherein said hard metal-plated layer (5) is made of copper.

37. (currently amended) A metal gasket for a cylinder head, comprising:

two base plates (2), respectively ~~made~~ comprised of i) metal plates and layered over each other, each of said base plates (2) including cylinder holes (2a) formed to correspond to respective cylinder bores on a cylinder block of an internal combustion engine, ii) annular beads (2b) of an angled cross-sectional shape formed around said respective cylinder holes, iii) coolant holes (2c) formed on outer peripheral portions of said respective annular beads to correspond to coolant jackets on

said cylinder block and to coolant holes on a cylinder head of said internal combustion engine, and iv) an outer peripheral bead (2d) having a cross-sectional shape sloping on one side and being formed in a position to totally surround said annular beads and said coolant holes; and

a hard metal-plated layer (5), on a surface of one of the two base plates facing the other of the two base plates, and configured to extend from a position more radially inward than said annular bead to a position radially outward to overlap each of said annular beads of said base plate and to face a top portion of said annular bead, and thereby to surround each of said cylinder holes on said base plate annularly, wherein,

said hard metal-plated layer (5) has hardness equal to or above Hv 60, and

said hard metal-plated layer (5) at a less rigid portion of said internal combustion engine has a first thickness greater than a second thickness of said hard metal-plated layer (5) at a more rigid portion of said internal combustion engine such that a total thickness of a step structure of the hard metal-plated layer at ~~any one~~ each of the cylinder holes (2a) corresponds to a distribution of rigidity of said internal combustion engine at ~~any one~~ each of the respective cylinder bores.

38. (previously presented) The metal gasket for a cylinder head according to claim 37,

wherein said hard metal-plated layer (5) is made of nickel.

39. (previously presented) The metal gasket for a cylinder head according to claim 37,

wherein said hard metal-plated layer (5) is made of nickel-phosphorus.

40. (previously presented) The metal gasket for a cylinder head according to claim 37,

wherein said hard metal-plated layer (5) is made of copper.

41. (previously presented) The metal gasket for a cylinder head according to claim 37, further comprising:

an auxiliary plate (3) ~~made~~ comprised of a metal plate, ~~and the auxiliary plate being~~ interposed between said two base plates.